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Pipeline Operators Applaud DOJ Pledge to Prosecute Pipeline Attacks

WASHINGTON, DC – The Association of Oil Pipe Lines (AOPL) today applauded a statement by the U.S. Department of Justice to news outlets pledging to prosecute protesters who damage energy infrastructure.

“The federal government can provide a deterrent to anyone getting hurt or causing a pipeline release into the environment,” said Andrew Black, AOPL President and CEO.

Pipeline operators place shut-off valves periodically along the length of a pipeline to help control the flow of product and isolate certain segments of pipe if needed. When operated correctly by trained engineers, pipelines are the safest way to transport the large volumes of crude oil and petroleum products American consumers need.

However, pipelines operate under as much as 1,000 pounds of pressure per square inch. Incorrectly closing a valve in the middle of a pipeline without simultaneous control of pumps before and after the valves could cause a pressure surge, rupture the pipeline and cause a spill impacting the public and environment. An industry review of pipeline valve incidents found nine different examples of pressure surge releases with one resulting in nearly 4,000 barrels of crude oil spilled. For these reasons, pipeline facilities behind lock and key are protected for the safety of the public. Vandalizing, attempting to operate or otherwise tampering with pipeline equipment is dangerous and risks hurting those involved, the public or environment.

Pipeline operators recognize there are disagreements about how best to deliver the energy American consumers need. Voicing those views is a basic American right. However, taking protest actions that could hurt themselves or the public or damage private property or the environment is not the best way to express those views.

Federal law currently prohibits damaging or destroying interstate hazardous liquids or natural gas pipelines. Federal government commitment to enforcing and prosecuting these laws will protect the public and the environment from any pipeline release that might result from criminal activity against pipelines.

[Reuters and CNBC are reporting](#) DOJ's statement is in response to a bipartisan letter to Attorney General Jeff Sessions by 84 U.S. Representatives led by Rep. Buck (R-CO). DOJ reportedly committed to prosecute vigorously those who damage critical infrastructure in violation of federal law.

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